Preparatory-Grace IN Conversion, BRIEFLY STATED and EXAMINED.

By *Thomas Barnes.*

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~~1 Ann Sanderson~~

J. Gill.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Sermon had the unhappiness to be censured as unsound; and the offence proved greater, by a supposed Opposition therein made to another Sermon, preached a little before by an eminent Pastor in this Place. For my part, having not for some time heard him, I could not rationally be suspected of an intention to interfere with Matters, I was not acquainted with. Only being informed of some popular Expressions he had used against that Phrase of [*coming to Christ*] *and such as press it: I confess, it did increase my* Jealousies *of a Man, whom for Age and Gifts, I may never expect to equal.* Dr. Gilpin of Newcastle.

This is all the Apology I need for this Publication of the Discourse, which is the very same it was when before delivered.

'Tis not out of haſt to appear in publick againſt a Man of his Acceptation in the World, but if poſſible to allay the Prejudices of ſome, *to do good to* many; *as his Sermon was not without its Scandal to the* Few.

Probable it is, that they who will not hear me, will not read my Sermon: And it is probable the Caſe may be put, whether a Miniſter of Chriſt, is not as well without the Company of ſuch Readers and ſuch Hearers.

Jan. 18. 1699.

The

The Review of a Sermon, as it was Preached in a Connection with Others, from that Text,

Ezek. 1. 26.

And upon the likeneſs of the Throne, was the likeneſs as the appearance of a Man above upon it.

THE Cherubims are the Creatures of God, deſcribed here as upon the Wheel and Motion, under the Government of their Creator. The Similitudes made uſe to repreſent theſe things, may occaſion a thought like that Fathers, *Quam alta ſonant hic Myſteria! What grave Myſteries have we here?* When he would have them move, they move: When he would have them ſtand ſtill, they do ſo. Thus all God's Creatures are at his Command.

Things being thus diſpoſed of, the Father ſets the Son in his own Throne, and by a voluntary grant, conſigns the whole Univerſe over to him, as King *over all things to the Church*, Epheſ. 1. 22.

This is the ſubſtance of this Context, according to the common ſenſe of Commentators and Divines. In this poſture, *Ezekiel* ſees him above the Firmament upon the Throne, as the Appearance of a Man, ſuch a Man, as is above all his Fellows. Now that this puts no force upon the Text, beyond the intendment of it, appears in the ſubſequent Verſe, where Chriſt is compared to Lamps of Fire. And the Apoſtle tells you, in *Col.* 1. *v.* 16, 17. *All things were made by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt.* The *Jewiſh* Doctors grant this in effect, when they teach the Omnipotency of God, and his Majeſty, to be exhibited herein as preſiding over all the works of his hands. This ſay we, is the Glory of God, as now manifeſted in Chriſt: Hence my Doctrine was this,

That the Lord Jeſus as God-Man [Mediator] has the weight of the whole Creation upon his hands, and ſupports it by his Power.

To

To make out this Obſervation, I have given you ſeveral proofs of the power of Chriſt, by ſhowing you his univerſal influx upon the Creatures, *Act.* 17. 28. This power I have informed you, is either Moral and Legiſlative, or Natural and Phyſical. The former in his Diſtribution of Gifts, *Pſal.* 68. 18. *Mat.* ult. 18, 19. The latter in the works of Creation at firſt, and his raiſing our Bodies at the laſt day. I ſhowed you alſo the extent of this power in both kinds; and *laſtly*, I gave you ſome concluding Applications.

V. Syntag. max Polem. p. 2438.

What remains for me further to do upon this Subject, is to evidence, that our Lord Chriſt, in this his ſupereminent Advancement varies his Influences, according to the various Creatures, upon which his Power terminates. All Creatures are the Objects of the Power of Chriſt, but all Creatures are not the ſame in kind. He glorifies his Power every day, both upon Man and Beaſt: And yet he acts not the ſame way upon the *One*, which he does upon the *Other*. This naturally leads me to ſpeak of that great Work of Chriſt, in the *Converſion* of a Sinner unto himſelf; wherein indeed

deed he deals with Man as a reasonable Creature, and yet gives us blessed Demonstrations, that converting Grace, is *above* the Powers of Nature.

And the rather do I at present fix upon *this*; Because the Instance of Christ's Power in Conversion, takes in both the Members of the former Distinction. For in the *first place*, The changing of the Sinner, is an Act of his Legislative, or *Mediatorial* Power: The Sinner was given to him, of the Father, *John* 17. 2. and to the Sinner has he a Covenant-Right, nay, a right of Redemption; although the Sinner have no right to Christ until actual Faith. In Conversion Christ recovers his Right, and by Faith at Conversion does an elect Person's Right become *Actionable*, according to the terms of the Covenant.

And then again, in the *second place*, Conversion is a part of the *Physical* or Natural Power of Christ. He works Faith in thy heart by the same Power, wherewith he raised himself from the Dead, *Ephes.* 1. 19, 20.

To be as practical then, as may be in this Case, accept of a few short Notes.

First,

First, *When Christ converts the Soul, he makes it see its own Misery.*

That it is a miserable Soul without him, and here it appears, that other things without this degree of Conviction are unsound, as to instance in the noted Young Man in the Gospel, *Mat.* 19. 20. *The Young Man saith unto him, all those things have I kept from my Youth, what lack I yet?* A sad sign of a bad state, doubtless this was, and an high Opinion of his own Abilities doubtless he *had.* He had done this and that, — One would think here were promising preparations for Grace. Ay, but saies Christ, *one* thing thou lackest! and that one spoiled all.

Thus deals Christ with *all*, when he comes to deal to purpose: He lets them see their *Preparations*, if they *proceed* not, are preparations for Hell. A saving Faith must compleat the Work; the Man thought he heard well, and prayed well, and lived well: But when Christ comes, he counts all things Dung for Christ.

Secondly, *The Man sees a necessity of Holiness.*

Without Holineſs he knows there is no Happineſs; ſo that he betakes himſelf to Chriſt, as to the Fountain of Holineſs. Is hearing the Word neceſſary? Is the practice of Duties neceſſary? O then, how neceſſary is it, that above all, I have *Faith*, without which all other Performances are in Vain? If you are for Holineſs *indeed*, and not in Name and Talk, you muſt dig as deep as Faith in the Blood of Chriſt for it. Holineſs is Chriſt's Image on the heart: All that the Believers does, is *from* Chriſt as well as for Chriſt. Here is the Chriſtian, who hath more real Holineſs, than the moſt ſplendid Hypocrite in the World: And yet this Chriſtian confeſſes, that but for Chriſt's Righteouſneſs, his beſt Duties would undoe him. He is as much for Holineſs, as God would have him be; but ſtill takes care that his Holineſs be not put in the room, of what God has done for him by his Son.

The Man is not onely convinced, that he muſt have the White Garments of Holineſs, but he is further convinced, he muſt have the White Rayment of Chriſt, if ever he get it at all. Hence

he makes a bold venture with them in the Gospel, for a *Touch of his Garments, to make* him whole. Others, he leaves to their Forms and Complements in Religion; all the Preparation, the Man I speak of desires, is, that he may have leave to cast himself at the feet of his Judge, and acknowledge his own Vileness. At such a pungent rate, doth the Spirit in Conversion press the Sinner; he sees plainly, that some with their Preparations, stick in their Preparations all their days, but the convinced Sinner does not tarry there.

Thirdly, *The Soul is made sensible of the difficulty of Faith.*

To Flesh and Blood he finds it utterly impossible to believe. O then, Men make a Noise with their Abilities, this poor Man cries, I believe, Lord help my Unbelief! He will tell you, that going to Christ, is the longest, the hardest step, he ever took in his Life. Whatever he be doing, and whatever Providences he be under for help, he has ever recourse to his Jesus. If he Prays, he goes to Christ in Prayer, or else he knows his Prayer is lost: If to the Lord's Supper, therein also he goes to Christ. It is not the *work*

done, but the *enjoyment* of Christ in it, wherein his heart terminates: In a word, this is the sum of a Christian, whereas we are all going some whither; some to their Riches, some to their Duties, most to the Creatures; this Man from the first Minute of his Conversion, to the last of his life, is following after Christ.

Some indeed, who are at ease in *Sion*, begin wantonly to ask us, what do we *mean* by going unto Christ? Surely, Sirs, our blessed Lord *meant* somewhat, when he bid the Weary and Heavy-laden come to him. Come to me? Why, in plain *English* do not run away from Me, do not turn your backs of Me, but come to Me. And I speak freely, I'm afraid we grow into a dislike of the *thing*, that makes us object childish Cavils against the Name. Well then, the sensible Sinner improves the Grace, that is in the external Call, and turns it into an Argument thus with Christ; *Lord* (saies he) *thou callest me by thy Gospel, give me Grace to answer this thy Call*: Thou must *cause* as well as *call* me to come, or otherwise thy Call will be ineffectual.

Thus he pleads for Mercy, as the Penitent Thief did upon the Cross, *Luke* 23. 42. *Re-*

42. *Remember me, when thou comeſt into thy Kingdom.* It's not amiſs to Note, how by this Example, Chriſt triumph'd over the ignominy of his Croſs, by pardoning a Sinner, a vile Sinner, viler than the Death he died. Theſe two crucified Wretches, had been woful Companions in Sin; whatever Light, whatever Knowledge, whatever Educations they had been under (not to ſtay to enquire into their Hiſtory) both came alike to a Tragical End. So far were they from being prepared formally, by their common Qualifications (be they what they would) that ſin (for ought their light could do to hinder it) had prepared them for the Gallows. Now notwithſtanding, they both lay equally fair for Chriſt (*i. e.* were as far from him, as a ſtate of Nature is from a ſtate of Grace;) yet you ſee, Chriſt takes one, and makes him a Moniment of his Pardon: Yes, one *Item* of Grace from Chriſt, puts the Soul into Paradiſe, when all other Preparations, ſhort of *this*, will leave it at the Doors of Heaven for ever.

Fourthly, *The Lord by his efficacious Grace, in Converſion, perſuades the Man, in the laſt place, that the longer he ſtays away from*

from him, his condition is but the Worſe.

Let me be never ſo well accounted and prepared (ſaies he) if I be not yet got *thither*, I may periſh for all my Preparations. Is it my Duty to Believe? Then I muſt Believe: Give me Chriſt, or elſe I die. Tell him not of this and that, --- that he muſt ſet upon the Duty of Prayer, --- that he muſt be inſtructed in the Documents of Religion, --- alaſs, thinks he, I have been long enough at that paſs; I have Prayed many a time, I have been an Hearer this Forty Years, and for knowledge, I have been head and ſhoulders taller than my Neighbours; and what avails all this, ſo long as I go without Chriſt in the World! My Prayers have increaſt my Formality; my Hearing has hardned my Heart; my Knowledge deſerves no better Name, than Blindneſs, Ignorance and Pride. Thus do theſe Compunctions of the Spirit prick the hearts of Men; thus do they lament themſelves, when they look back upon their Preparations, without Union unto Chriſt.

And what ſhall I ſay? Doth not *Paul* ſpeak this Language? 1 *Tim.* 1.13. when he tells us, He *had obtained Mercy*, there had

had been vital action betwixt Christ and him; ay, but what was he before this? *Before this* (cries he) *I was a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious.* Much common Illumination he had had, going as far as his *Rational* Abilities could reach: Well! this disposed him, it seems to Blasphemy, it prepared him for Malignity and Persecution. For let me add, that his Rage and Cruelty, did not *contradict* that light, which he had, as he was a *Jew:* No, they were the genuine Productions of his Rabbinical Instructions, before he became acquainted with Christ.

I do not at present fore-see the frailty of this Proposition. Before the Apostle obtained Mercy, he had some preparative workings towards the receipt of Christ, or he had none: If he had none, then the Doctrine of Preparations will not hold *de Omni*, because some are converted without them.

If *Paul* had preparatory workings towards Christ, then it was his Blasphemy and Persecution, that were these Preparations. For before I obtained Mercy, (saies he) this is the *best* account I can give of my self, I lived in Ignorance and Unbelief, and these are but unlikely Preparations for Christ. Besides, All

All Men, as well as *Paul*, are either brought to Faith, or they are yet in Unbelief: If they be brought to Faith, they are beyond any such Preparation. If they be yet in Unbelief, their hearts are fast bar'd against the Lord Jesus, and to have the heart fast lockt against Christ, is but an odd preparation to receive him.

And now for the *use* of this, I expect it will be said, That truly these are but *general* intimations; and it may be, I am not so precipitant as not to be aware of *Difficulties* in my way; most Applications are practical. Mine at this time, will be Doctrinal and *Defensative*. And two things I shall be concerned in, wherein there will be a *Closer* attendance to the point: *One is this*, Doth not this vacate Mens endeavours? *Answ.* No one instructed in the Mystery of Christ will say so. The truth is, all our mischief arises either from some Mens making *nature* to do all without Christ, or so making Christ to do all, as leaving no personal duty to us. Three ways they here take; some assert that all our Conversion is wrought by universal Grace, as *Arminius* against *Corvinus*. Others say, that as Faith is not in our power, so neither doth God require

it

it of us, nor is it on our part, particularly necessary to Salvation, that Christ has believed for us, and is himself instead of all. To this purpose writ *Saltmarsh*, *Dell*, *Smithfield* and the German *Antinomians*. Now these are two gross extreams, and vile Abominations are they both; there are a third sort, who say, tho' Faith and Holiness are required of us, and altho' we cannot work them in our selves, yet *every* Man can do *something* in order to them. They tell you, that albeit, Faith or the *Act* of coming to Christ be not in our power yet, still something may be done in *order* to it, by way of Preparation; and when these Preparations are search't into, they are the fruits of Mens natural Abilities, tho' the main stroak of Conversion be not so.

As to my self, I am shie of extolling the powers of Nature, what *mighty* things Men can do. (They who find such Methods in Divinity most adapted to work savingly on the Souls of Men, may follow their own Wisdom. It discourages me, so long as Scripture says expressly, the natural *Man*, in spiritual *things*, can do just *nothing*.) I say, use all means diligently, Pray, Read, Study; let his portion be shame amongst the Tribe of *Levi*, that abates your Dili-

gence: Yet know *without* Chriſt, in the uſe of means, you are Dead, Dying, damning Miſcreants. No body contends againſt this, that there are *quædam naturæ Dotes*, often *materially* good things in Men, and *materially* good things done by them; yet 'tis unſavory to call theſe the Connections, or infallible Preparations to Grace: For, as a great Man in the Goſpel ſays well, they are no more Preparations than the drineſs of Wood, is a preparation for Fire. We all know that dry Wood is readier for Fire, than Wood which is wet; (ſo you who conſcientiouſly attend the means of Grace, are in a more hopeful way, than ſuch as do deſpiſe them) but ſtill the drineſs of the Wood partakes not of the nature of Fire, and it may lie until it rot, before it will take fire of its ſelf, for all its drineſs. The diſtinction therefore which the ſaid venerable Author uſes in compliance with the *Synod of Dort*, is not denied by me; provided it be taken with the Analogy, of what a Prelate of the *Church of England*, who was a Member of that *Synod*, aſſerts, and elſewhere explains himſelf in: Dr. *Owen* (a Divine ſooner envied than imitated) lays down a clear difference betwixt material Diſpoſitions (ſuch as

Dr. Owen of the Spirit, Book 3. ch. 2.

Owen. Determ. Quæſt. Qu. 9. V. Et Teſtardum Synopſ. de Nat. & Grat. Prop. 7.

as Illumination, and Historical Information, as *Eusebius* writ a Book of Evangelical Preparation) and formal Preparation, which are the works of the Spirit (not the uncertain Velitations of Mens Wills) always issuing in a saving Faith: And to this sense, speak the reformed in *Poland*. The *Socinians* there opposing the Divine Worship of Christ, occasioned a debate touching sufficient and effectual Grace; wherein I have with a particular Curiosity, seen a Manuscript in *Sion* College, containing some imperfect Account of the Synod of *Pinkzove*; where it is not impossible for me to produce their suffrages to this effect; that sometimes Men are converted without discernible preparative Workings, and to the best of my understanding, the *French* Jesuists, in Monsieur St. *Amour's* Journal, in that Article of the *Quinquarticular points*, are at one with them. So that you see, most parties feel a tenderness in this place, and that the Doctrine of Preparations had need be warily received.

v. *Asswell. de Socino & Socinismo Dis.* §. 31. §. 79.

I know the Scripture mentions some Converts who were wrought upon, by a long train of Convictions, and what I affirm, is this, That where these Convictions

De Corrept. & Grat. cap. 15.

are *saving*, they are the *Effects* of Faith, and *Preparations for it*. Readily for this Reason, I concur with *Augustin*, because we know not who belong to Election, we are to wish well to all. But that these Preparations are not *specifically* distinct from special Grace, is Doctrine more becoming what *Plato* teaches, than what we read in Scripture-Records, where the Lord opened the heart of *Lydia* in an instant, without any *preliminary probation*, that we know of. Take but the instance of Mr. *Elliat*, which Mr. *Cotton Mather* gives in his life, when he preached his *first Sermon* to the Pagan *Indians*, they told Mr. *Elliat*, *they understood all* that he had Preach'd, becoming serious Proselites to Christ, and as appears in the Sequel, making Profession of their Faith. I would only put the Question now, *Where were these Mens Preparations?* Ah, *Brethren*, distrest Souls will bless God, there is so near a way to relief, as going to Christ, when others who have nothing else to do, will trifle with it.

Lib. 6. ad lecib.

Pag. 101.

The other *Exception* is this, This lays all at Christ's Door, and not at the Door of Man's will; till I know who will own this Exception, I shall not inlarge upon what *Paul* speaks, *Rom.* 9. 16. *So then, it is not in him*

him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth Mercy. A troubled person will go to Prayer, but it is not *the* Prayer, but the *sight* of his Soul to Christ *in* Prayer, that gives him ease: Yes, the direct acts of Faith secure the Souls of Men.

Obj. But still I'm afraid there is a *Latent* Antinomianism in this. *Anſ. Deus avertat Omen*; Jealouſies are the ruin of Friendſhip. If I ſhould tell you, that there is a *Latent* Arminianiſm in your Objection, and that this way of driving on Duties without Chriſt's company, is but a dead way, as appears in the cold hearts and ſapleſs profeſſion of your Party; you would ſay I wanted Charity, and we ſhould have nothing but a ſquabble of it. It is but a *Trite* Calumny caſt in the way of the Orthodox, and a ſlur upon the order of the Goſpel, as if it precluded Mens endeavours. Of truth nothing comes but truth, when lyes and baſe deſigns, need ſhifts and endleſs Cavils.

Obj. *You are too Rigid, wiſe Men take middle Courſes.*

Anſ. Ay, certainly, he who has to do with wiſe Men, had need be wary: But the beſt on't is, there is no mean betwixt Truth and Error. I never thought *Calvin*, as infallible a *Divine* as *Paul*; and yet I know

know not how Men celebrated in their day, have made sowr complaints of an *unsuspected* Declension, by taking a middle course even in this self same *Calvinism*. However, if it be possible for me to keep up a good Correspondence with your Judicious Moderators, I shall freely referr my self to one, whom unfeignedly I value, and I comfort my self, I have his sense in all that I have said.

L' Blanc, Th. 1. p. 429.

Cmb Theol. Book. 2. 151.

Nay! for once, Mr. *Baxter* shall be my shield, and what he says will go far with many; *all good Dispositions* (says that good Man, who gave the world, which he little liked, many a loud Warning, he was no Antinomian) *is from God*; so that it seems, a Man may avouch this, and yet inforce the use of means.

I appeal to all who have any concern in Religion, whether of these two do most inforce Duty? To say, Never expect, O Man, thy Conversion, but in a due use of God's appointed means. Or to say, Never expect thy Conversion, till thou hast past thro' thy course of *Preparation*. χαῖρε Πυθαγόρα! Here is a rare disciplinary-silence for your *Catechumeni*, your Pythagorick Probationers! Why? How long must Men be preparing? When come these Preparations to their

their Compleatment? Will the *Fox*, by all his apish tricks, attain the *reason* of a Man, and by *degrees* become a Senator? Impossible! Oh! God forbid, I conjure you of *New-castle*, be not so Devil-ridden by Craft, as to stand at play with Notions in the way of your Salvation.

With such measure of Preaching Gifts, as by Prayer some measure of honest Diligence (as I can get a bad heart forward) and copying after my betters, I can attain to: I admonish you to beg of Christ, to save you, because you cannot save your selves. This is the work of Ministers. And the Serpent never show'd himself more a Serpent than in incumbring the simplicity of this Truth. We say, there is no true Holiness, but what is a fruit of Faith, and therefore as ever we would have Men cloathed, we would have them repair to *God's Wardrobe*. And what of all this? Why, then we are not sound; then we are not *Orthodox*; then we are Antinomians, and all that Nonsense, Wickedness, and ill breeding can suggest. If those be your Wise Middle Siz'd-Divinity-Men, it is a piece of effronted impudence in them, to insinuate such Innuendo's as that our way leaves no room for Duties. They Father upon us some base-

born

born Conclusions of their own, and then raise a crowing Triumph, that they have killed a Monster. No, no, practical Holiness (as a grave Man says upon a grave Subject) is God's reflected or impresst image on his Saints, and is an essential part of Gospel-Redemption.

How, of Blessedness.

This Undermining the Doctrine of the grace of God, rendred the *reformation* depresst and unsuccessful in *Poland*; by this did the *Learned Amyraldus* shatter the Protestant Churches of *France*. And this design is a Party (a Peace-making Party, if you will believe them) carrying on, in *England* to the utter ruin of Peace, and the Power of Godliness amongst us.

And now (good Reader) thou hast that discourse separated from the rest, which gave offence. And having taken the trouble to read these few leaves, Pray tell me, what Heresie thou canst spie in all this? Is there any cause given, why a poor beginner in his Master's Vineyard should meet with so much Treachery, so much Blindness and Contempt? Little Souls are full of Self-advancement upon very slender Grounds.

But, Man's day is so short-liv'd a thing, it is never worth too many thoughts about it. Our grievances are *Coram Rege*, and there is a Judge stands at the Door, in whose Eyes, the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater, than old *John* the Baptist.

FINIS.

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